



Ref: RIC: 026

May 2nd 2008

For Immediate Release

RIC INITIATIVES WILL REDUCE RATES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

For Low-income earners, paying their electricity bill will become more affordable. This was the assurance given to representatives of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) today, Monday 28th April 2008, at the RIC's office in Port-of-Spain. The meeting was convened in response to DPI's concerns that the impending T&TEC rate increase for residential customers would pose an additional financial burden on an already impoverished arm of society. At the meeting the RIC took the opportunity to highlight the provisions that were already stipulated in the RIC's Final Determination on the Regulation of Electricity Transmission and Distribution which was released on June 01, 2006.

Initial public response to the impact of the increased rates has been passionate and has roused much debate with lower-income groups being particularly disadvantaged. The RIC is sensitive to their dilemma, and the impact of increased prices on lower-income groups such as pensioners, the differently-abled, and other vulnerable groups, continues to be of particular concern to the RIC.

To this end, the RIC had mandated that T&TEC establish a Low-Income Assistance Programme with the intension of reducing the full brunt of the rate increase on low-income earners. In its determination the RIC had proposed that a **\$5 million Low-Income Assistance Programme** that will benefit those who rely on old aged pensions and disabled persons whose monthly income is approximately \$1,150.00 or less. A customer's eligibility as a low-income earner is assured only after their application is registered with T&TEC, and it has been confirmed that they are on the Ministry of Social Development's list of Disability Assistance recipients. The fund will therefore be used for:

- Customer bill assistance (that is, a maximum of 7% and 5% of customer's bill for customers using less than 100 kWh and between 101 to 400 kWh respectively);
- Appliance repair assistance; and
- Arrears forgiveness.

Apart from these, other measures under the low-income assistance programme will include:

- Waiving of interest payments on outstanding accounts;

- Protection from service termination (some forms of non-payment are not to be tolerated i.e. illegal tampering of meters); and
- Extended payment arrangements i.e. the option of arranging alternative payment schedules and deferring payments.

As an impartial body, the RIC is working to ensure the development and the delivery of the highest quality of utility services while ensuring that all stakeholders are treated fairly. For the RIC, adding value to the lives of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago continues to be a high priority item.

End of Release.

Contact:

Denise Caesar

Corporate Communications Coordinator

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION @ 627-0503 # 322 / 624-2027 (Fax)